

Hearing Date: September 30, 2021 8:00 AM

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COMMENTS FOR: Review impact of migration on state's economy and trade with Mexico.

GW Hall

SELF/CARRIER

Houston, TX

OPPOSE

Guadalupe Cuellar, Legislative Attorney

City of El Paso

El Paso, TX

During 2020, El Paso ranked second in personal vehicle crossings (7.2 million), second in pedestrian crossings (3.3 million), and third in cargo crossings (over 750,000) when compared to other border communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. This intense cross-border activity denotes an important trade presence in both cities with a total value of trade of \$70.4 billion in 2020.

Higher volumes of trade and ongoing security concerns pose significant challenges. Many products that cross the Texas-Mexico border are just-in-time (JIT) products that are part of global supply chains and border congestion and delays at the POEs disrupt these chains, affects productivity, increase transportation costs, increase inventory levels, reduce trade levels, and induce higher prices.

One event that caused significant cross-border delays was the influx of substantial volumes of asylum seekers in 2019. These high volumes of migrants triggered the reassignment of CBP agents (frequently to other cities) to aid in their DHS processing. This in turn led to staff shortages at the ports of entry and, hence, increased crossing times and reduced trade. Although isolating the impact of asylum seekers or migrants is difficult to assess, the Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan (2021) states that border delays of cargo vehicles along the El Paso/Santa Teresa/Chihuahua region ended up reducing U.S. and Mexico GDPs by \$0.6 billion and \$0.5 billion in 2019, respectively. Similarly, border delays for people traveling into the U.S. along the El Paso/Santa Teresa/Chihuahua region represented a lost economic opportunity (GDP) of approximately \$152.9 million for the U.S. side and \$62.9 million to the Mexican side.

During the migrant crisis of 2019, El Paso had the largest influx of migrant families seeking asylum across the entire southwest border, even surpassing the Rio Grande Valley as 95% of those being apprehended were family units, who were subsequently release into the community. During approximately a six month period El Paso received over 120,000 migrants, requiring over 30 hospitality sites in El Paso, Las Cruces and Albuquerque, NM in response to the humanitarian crisis. This required significant emergency management, public safety, transportation and staff resources from local jurisdictions to support the NGO, faith-based and volunteer based operation. The CDC public health measure of immediate removal of a majority of migrants encountered at the border helped to reduce the impact of the migrant surge in the El Paso sector. However, the Migrant Protection Protocol program (MPP) drawdown and flights received from the Rio Grande Valley and most recently, the Haitian migration from the Del Rio, El Paso County has seen another influx of migrants in September of 2021. This migrant surge has posed a different set of challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic has required extensive isolation and quarantine of COVID positive migrants.
